

**Original citation:**

Drovsek-Zorko, Spela (2014) Diasporic memory and narratives of spatiotemporality. In: Ahrens, Rüdiger and Stierstorfer, Klaus and Kläger, Florian, (eds.) Symbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics 14. Symbolism (14). Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, pp. 43-58.

**Permanent WRAP URL:**

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/98708>

**Copyright and reuse:**

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

**Publisher's statement:**

Published version: <https://www.degruyter.com/view/product/448801>

Published source: [De Gruyter](http://www.degruyter.com)

**A note on versions:**

The version presented here may differ from the published version or, version of record, if you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the 'permanent WRAP URL' above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: [wrap@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:wrap@warwick.ac.uk)

## Diasporic Memory and Narratives of Spatiotemporality

Drawing on the experience of an ongoing ethnographic project on family stories of socialist Yugoslavia, this essay asks how diasporic narratives might be located at various points of imagined spatiotemporalities. I examine some of the ways in which anthropology has dealt with cultural time, in order to see how the intergenerational narration of time might be co-constitutive of spaces of diaspora. Thinking about the ways in which both academic and commonplace discourses have shaped the expected narrative of the Yugoslav past, I also ask whether we might effect a more nuanced approach to analyzing how grounded, present-day experiences of diaspora space come to relationally construct other places and other times.<sup>103</sup>

This paper can only begin at a point of interval, of pausing and taking stock; a necessary moment in the life of an ongoing ethnographic project. It requires that I begin with a brief introduction to my current research on diasporic narratives of the Yugoslav past, before embarking on a discussion about the role which spatiotemporal symbols may play in constructing the past, present, and future, at a point where post-socialism and diaspora intersect. The primary goal of my project is an engagement with diasporic intergenerational memories, specifically, memories of former socialist Yugoslavia and its aftermath. I am interested in asking how memories of the past are located, both spatially, temporally, and in terms of situated social locations, among migrants from the former federation currently living in the United Kingdom. In order to highlight the mediated nature of memory, particularly in intergenerational contexts where the means by which experience comes to be communicated within family and community networks acquires specific significance, I use the lens of diasporic narrative rather than diasporic identity to pose my questions. When commencing my fieldwork in the autumn of 2013, I chose to understand the concept of narrative relatively broadly: as the ordering and sharing of experience (and experience-as-memory), always produced to some extent in conjunction with, or reaction to, collective discourses of the past and present. In other words, my aim is to

understand personal stories, or their fragments, as necessarily situated within other stories and the stories of others, which co-create spaces of potential meaning and location.

My theoretical framework is strongly influenced by the idea that the term 'diaspora' is less fruitful when used to denote a pre-given, bounded group, or even unified political stance, than when approached as a category of practice for creating the spaces and times people inhabit. The challenge is to bring these strands together in such a way that approaching this topic does not require separating diaspora, narrative, and memory into constituent parts of a whole, but rather, requires being aware of how they co-constitute their subjects. Given the limitations of my standpoint, in the midst of an open-ended project, I do not aim to offer any firm conclusions on the questions I raise; rather, I outline several theoretical, and thus methodological, reflections on how diasporic memory could be studied in relation to symbols of time and space, based partially on my experience of fieldwork thus far. This would involve thinking of the way people reference times and spaces in narratives of their own lives, as well as how they frame experience within the scope of grand historical narratives. I also intend to raise several questions about how these narratives serve to construct the time-spaces in which diasporic home-making is enacted. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 'diaspora' is more often yoked to questions of space than it is of time: to migration from and to given localities, or issues of dwelling within particular spaces. My aim is to think how conceptions of space may be inflected with a sense of temporality, and vice versa, and how such symbolic spatiotemporalities may be important to diasporic home-making – an approach, I would add, which does not foreclose an awareness of the material, often referred to as 'lived,' interconnections which home-making also implies.

Starting from the premise that time in social contexts always stands for something, and that this meaning is not only changeable across so-called cultures but has a more complex relation to meaning-making, this paper investigates ways of thinking about time talk in the everyday which would contribute to how we view diasporic spaces. It is practically a tradition among anthropologists to characterize any discussion on cultural or social constructions of time as a matter of "infinite complexity"<sup>104</sup> and irreconcilable heterogeneities. Yet the very significance of people's diverse conceptions of temporality is always that they turn on situational invocations of time as in some way significant: be it shared collectively through myriad representations of time in calendars, in stories of experience, in off-hand anecdotes, official accounts of social life; or via the implicit ordering of duration into standardized units of time, the rhythms

of everyday life, and, just as importantly, the marked changes in those moments of everydayness. The quotidian nature of narrated time makes it a useful entry point for approaching those questions of social life which are continually framed by references to temporality. Doing so requires an expectation that social time is mutable and contingent, combined with a willingness to examine the role it plays in constructing similarly mutable notions of space and location. It also requires us to think how academic disciplines are themselves structured around narratives of time, and to locate individual projects within the power relations of those symbolic spatiotemporalities within which every ethnographic endeavor is enmeshed.

## **Anthropology and the Construction of Time**

It may seem quaint to begin this discussion with classical anthropological debates on cultural time; they are, however, remarkably useful for thinking about how analytical separations of temporality may be loaded not just with social, but with outright political significance. In a landmark 1977 lecture much cited in the literature, Maurice Bloch uses the example of time to illustrate critical contradictions within Durkheimian notions of socially determined cognition. Bloch argues that those core cultural concepts which are "moulded to social structure,"<sup>105</sup> such as time, tend not to represent fundamental cultural differences between societies in the ordering of knowledge, but are instead found largely in ritual discourses which are not typical of people's "ordinary knowledge." In other words, any given mode for thinking about time may well exhibit significant divergences between ritual discourses, which have been traditionally studied by anthropologists, and everyday uses and conceptualizations of time. Bloch's point is that ritual discourses cleave more faithfully to dominant social structure paradigms and can serve to obscure the realities of non-ritualized rhythms of "human action on nature,"<sup>106</sup> which are not wholly molded by such social structures. A firm separation into ritual and ordinary time allows him to account for key differences in people's diverse 'time talk,' which he sees as proof that societies are not totalizing orders but can be critiqued from social locations not enclosed within their logic.

The dichotomy leaves his analysis poorer. Bloch recognizes that the appearance of "the past in the present," which he posits as a function of ritual discourse, represents one aspect of a much longer historical conversation, and that such modes of time talk might occur at different

moments than non-ritual communication. Yet by placing the register of the ritual on a level detached from the arena of 'ordinary' social actors, he denies that those very actors may be presumed to play a role in the construction and continued intelligibility of such rituals. As Munn points out, Bloch's equation of ritual time with mystification serving the interests of social structure, as opposed to an empirically derived universal time, does not necessarily allow for dissent around what is defined or experienced as empirical reality by the people of whom he speaks.<sup>107</sup> However, Bloch is not alone in viewing such divisions as crucial. A similar conclusion is reached by Alfred Gell, who writes approvingly of Bloch's separation of ritual "special-purpose commentaries"<sup>108</sup> from the time in which actual events take place. Gell warns the would-be time ethnographer that there is no place in which "people experience time in a way that is markedly unlike the way in which we do ourselves,"<sup>109</sup> and that any accounts of time which seem to depart from the base line of 'our' time need to be studied without taking such references at face value as people's absolute beliefs in the nature of the universe.

Here it is worth turning to Victor Turner, well-known in anthropological circles for his work on ritual and liminality. His contribution to the anthropology of time takes a slightly different view of the role of ritual in perceptions of temporality. In his model, based on fieldwork conducted across three continents in mostly rural, but also urban contexts, and supposedly applicable to small kin groups as well as international relations, all human societies produce certain time rituals, which can be found in their contemporary form as genres of cultural representation such as drama, film, or fiction. These rituals make time intelligible by denying the primary significance of logical or quotidian forms of time reckoning – they make history continue by producing intervals of "anti-temporality."<sup>110</sup> Contrary to Bloch's analysis, such rituals do not serve the aims of social structures deemed to repress disharmony in social consensus. Rather, they take place in moments of "social dramas,"<sup>111</sup> when what was assumed by a given group to be unimpeachable *communitas*, the basis of communal life, is threatened by a breach in the expected social order. Rituals are thus deployed in order to restore, or make anew, a sense of harmony. Regardless of the outcome of such shoring-up rituals, claims Turner, they make it impossible to view those times of past accord as absolute and given, that is, as a logical progression of linear time. One way of reading Turner's model is thus to see cultural representations as instruments for making past time intelligible by placing it under the microscope – by stopping the rhythms of life previously seen as normal for as long as it takes to resolve their place in

the continued social order, whether such restorations are successful or not. Such an interpretation sees ritual as that which makes normal, quotidian time possible, by virtue of re-constituting an order, which in fact relies on multiple genres of temporal intelligibility.

Turner's take on the subject, despite upholding a division into ritual anti-temporal time and everyday linear temporality, nevertheless offers a more nuanced view of the position of ritualized explanations of time in the fabric of social life. It is particularly fruitful in its analysis of how rituals (or cultural productions) may serve to arrest those unquestioned forms of living 'in' time, which are assumed to be natural, without necessarily upholding previous social schemas. Insofar as I see any potential in divisions of time talk into categories, it lies in the opportunity to ask 'meta-narrative' questions about the appearance of temporality in human communication. Assuming that time talk exists in various, seemingly conflicting registers, what is the function of such variance and how does it interrelate? Does it matter if a multiplicity of time talk is not cosmological or "metaphysical," if it nevertheless exists in social life? When a given version of so-called ritual time appears to contribute to the constitution (or intelligibility) of relational social beings, we could argue that it is no less divorced from daily life than a putative ordinary time. Social actors necessarily reside in worlds circumscribed, if not limited, by such ritual narratives, although these may exist in greater plurality than any simple dichotomy accounts for. Here I tend to agree with Nancy Munn's critique of time anthropology, in which she suggests that it would be more useful to think of time in terms of "temporalization," as "a symbolic process continually being produced in everyday practices."<sup>112</sup> This approach foregrounds the fact that people are continually in sociocultural time even as they construct it in speech or action – which itself affects the ways in which time is spoken or enacted.

Munn also points to a continued tendency to see space as time's "Other" rather than, more accurately, its "Other Self,"<sup>113</sup> and to neglect futurity in its relationship to conceptions of past and present. It is in both these inflections of time, in the question of space and a sense of the future, that another, more fundamental critique of anthropology and time can be grounded. In 1983, Johannes Fabian launched a challenge to cultural anthropology based on the assumption (running through all the theories of cultural time I have just discussed) that time is one form in which relations of power are cast; and that, crucially, it is a form vital for anthropology's own constitution of its research object, the Other. Tracing anthropology through time, Fabian sees temporal discourse as fundamental to anthropology's claim to knowledge: as an allochronic



discipline, it historically established itself as a set of knowledge about “other men in another Time,”<sup>114</sup> denying the co-temporality and proximity of those who ethnographers have studied. Not only does this obscure the fact that anthropology’s subject exists in ‘our’ time, it has played a crucial role in justifying, by virtue of suggesting that cultural difference is based on irreconcilable positions in progressive linear time, political projects of capitalist and colonial oppression. Put differently, says Fabian, “geopolitics has its ideological foundations in chronopolitics.”<sup>115</sup> He proposes a radical overhaul of fundamental assumptions about anthropological praxis, a recognition of coevalness which sees co-temporality, the existence of the Other in our Time, as a crucial basis for any ethical interaction.<sup>116</sup>

Anthropology has undergone a number of internal critiques since the publication of Fabian’s book, including an ongoing re-examination of the repercussions of its colonial legacy. Yet it would not be an exaggeration to claim that such legacies continue to leave a mark on the ways in which objects of knowledge are constituted – not merely within anthropology, but within multiple disciplines in which associations with temporal locations take on an undeniably political character, not least in the way in which given subjects are framed and studied. The study of socialism and post-socialism is a key example of how commonplace frameworks of analysis may have longer histories of constituting intelligible knowledge, and how geopolitics and chronopolitics might collude in this constitution. My fieldwork has required that I take into account certain conventions for narrating ‘post-socialism,’ and relate them to patterns of time talk in relation to spaces once figured as socialist.

## **Chronopolitics and Narratives of (Post-)Socialism**

In what has now become the authoritative history of the twentieth century, the year 1989 stands as a symbol of the triumph of adaptable capitalist logic over petrified socialist and communist regimes.<sup>117</sup> Such a conceptual split appears as a natural descendant of the Cold War, which Verdery describes as “also [...] a form of knowledge and a cognitive organisation of the world,”<sup>118</sup> a deeply rooted logic which brought with it repercussions beyond the domain of the foreign and domestic policies it effected. This logic served to solidify a split between a capitalist West and a communist East, one which described locations along an assumed temporal line as well as geopolitical divisions. The fall of socialism in Europe thus marks an assumed fundamental rupture with this past, and has, for better or worse, indelibly marked subsequent treatments of

various 'transitions' from socialism to post-socialism.

The developmental metaphor of linear change and progress has lurked within this body of literature as it lurked for decades in ethnographic monographs of far-off, temporally backward people. As Burawoy and Verdery point out, transition theories take as their necessary and unthinking starting point a radical transformation between two incompatible ways of life, an assumption which remains intact even when the exact process and meaning of this transition may differ.<sup>19</sup> Even critical studies of transition are often caught up in a cognitive organization which fixes historical time in the discursive dichotomy of 'before' and 'after',<sup>20</sup> serving to solidify an almost ontological rupture. This distinction, in other words, inevitably shapes what questions about either socialism or its aftermath may reasonably be expected to hold significance, or even what questions may be posed.

Such conceptual ruptures may also map, with varying levels of precision, onto a conceptual order which pre-dates the Cold War and which fixes certain parts of Europe in a relational position of spatiotemporal inferiority. How this relationship should be characterized has formed the subject of debates where comparisons with former colonies often sit uneasily. Kovačević notes that as most Eastern European countries do not comfortably fit into a history of colonial relations as we know them, and thus tend to be left out of the lens of established postcolonial analysis, the "long history of Western attempts to identify Western Europe as enlightened, developed, and civilized in distinction to Eastern Europe"<sup>21</sup> has frequently been neglected. According to Wolff 's *Inventing Eastern Europe*, Enlightenment-era Western European knowledge of what Eastern Europe represented took the form of an "intellectual mastery"<sup>22</sup> not wholly unlike Said's *Orientalism*. On this point, Maria Todorova acknowledges the similarities between the two sets of discourses, but distinguishes "Balkanist" logic from *Orientalism* by virtue of several specificities belonging to the former: namely, what has made the Balkans so irresistibly mysterious and ambivalent in the eyes of Western European imagination is "the reflected light of the Orient,"<sup>23</sup> their supposed position in between Enlightened Europe and the Orient it had already conjured up. The metaphor of a "bridge" between civilizations represented not only spatial, but also fundamentally temporal difference – time seen not only in terms of its passing, but as a meaning-laden development, a linear progression from more primitive to more complex societies, where the image of East as West's more primitive cousin dogged the Balkans as it did other geospatialities. Thus, imagined<sup>24</sup> spatiotemporalities hinge on multiple relational images of other places



and other times, even where this otherness may not necessarily indicate great geospatial or historical distance from the vantage point of the one doing the imagining.

Against this background, socialism's historical claim to bring a new futurity to these backward regions cannot be left out of the equation. Much has been made recently of 'post-socialist nostalgia,' a supposed wave of startlingly positive memories of the socialist past currently sweeping across the former East Bloc and Yugoslavia.<sup>125</sup> But as Susan Stewart established, such remembering always points to a past that only ever existed as narrative, and is thus also narratively configured in the present.<sup>126</sup> Tanja Petrović's ethnography of cable factory workers in present-day Serbia offers rich images of this remembered, always-relational past. The factory, constructed as part of Yugoslavia's early industrialization projects, once represented a radical change in economic and social relations.<sup>127</sup> The present-day stories of those few workers who remain paint the factory as emblematic of the greater transformation wrought by the new socialist modernizing project, evoking a past which they still view as significantly more modern, replete with much greater possibilities for work, travel, and personal development – and more European – than the vantage point of the present. The ways in which this narrated past inverts a linear progression of time, inflecting the socialist past with images of greater futurity than the stalled post-socialist present, reminds us that whatever the Yugoslav project may have achieved, it bore ambitions to transform this small part of peripheral Europe into a progressive, industrialized, and future-oriented state, and explicitly challenging associations of Balkan temporality.

Approaching the narrated past with the awareness of the constructed nature of spatiotemporal locations can also undermine normalized assumptions about the analytical separation of time. Reading Petrović's account of the workers' current socioeconomic positions gives their fond reminiscences a perfectly legitimate grounding: it is tempting to ask who wouldn't speak approvingly of a past which compares favorably, at the very least in material terms, with the present-day of financial crisis. Why should this type of reminiscence in particular indicate anything particularly transgressive? There are questions here to be asked about the ways in which time is constructed by contemporaneous social actors – once we remember that the people who populate such ethnographies are positioned in 'our' time, not merely caught up in analytic categories of socialism/ post-socialism. Yet the very fact of a flourishing academic and popular attention to nostalgia for socialism, even when scholars present well-argued analyses of nostalgic talk, indicates that such narrative

constructions of the past are necessarily viewed as ideologically charged in some way. In other words, evoking the time of socialism as anything other than history to be swept under the carpet is often still coded as remarkable, in the most literal sense of needing to be remarked upon.

My own research hinges on the construction of time-spaces as shaped not only by the experience of socialism's historical passing and of the canonical political conventions for its framing, but also by that of migration and settlement in a place with its own contested histories and spaces. In approaching intergenerational references to the past as diasporic as well as contemporaneous, I pose the question of how different spaces are configured as different, and on what terms diasporic cultural differences comes to be imagined in relation to multiple spatiotemporalities marked by discursive conventions as well as individual memory. My fieldwork thus far has increased my awareness of how such narratives might be evoked via seemingly banal discourses and practices rather than sweeping statements on historical difference: in discussions of family life, experiences of labor, the mutability of normative values, and language; but also of the consequences of series of movements, or of living in spaces labelled as multicultural along lines which may seem, in turn, familiar and alien. Asking in what form the Yugoslav past figures in such practices in the present – or indeed, why it may be largely invisible – has led me to wonder how studying even micro-stories demands attention to how spaces as well as times are always constructed via relational narratives.

## **Time-spaces and/as Stories**

To avoid conceptually separating time from space in any ethnography of diasporic home-making processes, space must be viewed as something other than simply the background against which movement takes place. Diaspora studies, even in those more classical approaches that uphold a concept of diasporas as distinct groups of dispersed people, must necessarily deal with the implication of space as an active participant in the experience of diaspora and its construction. In other words, diasporic narratives (or identity constructions, or even movements) are seen as diasporic by the very fact of their telling at a distance from the assumed homeland or the home space – diasporic nostalgia already presupposes a spatialized logic of memory-making. However, most definitions of migratory or diasporic nostalgia tend to foreground a normative, linear relationship between space and memory: people move from the known

space, the locality of home, across oceans and other spaces to reach new, unknown ground, on which they now etch their memories. In this formulation, the space of the so-called receiving homeland exists in its totality a priori to the arrival of 'diasporas' from those other, also total spaces, which have been left behind.

There are more nuanced approaches. Avtar Brah has pointed to the need for seeing the diasporic in the very acts of settlement or home-making that follow such journeys between places, which themselves incorporate an understanding of imagined homes.<sup>128</sup> She sees the concept of diaspora as a means of conceptualizing a "homing desire"<sup>129</sup> even while critiquing the assumption of fixed roots implicit in "the desire for a homeland."<sup>130</sup> Rather than studying diasporas per se, Brah thus prefers to focus on the diaspora space in which such homing desires are enacted: "diaspora space is the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, cultural and psychic processes."<sup>131</sup> For Brah, it is crucial to view the concept of diaspora as "a confluence of memories," the collection and re-collection of journeying and homemaking which creates diaspora as a meaningful category.

To make the image of multiple narratives work, however, diaspora studies needs to make explicit a re-thinking of space as something which is not simply pre-given. The geographer Doreen Massey has gone some way toward challenging what she sees as three critically misleading assumptions about space, and reflecting on the shifts in thinking that would be required for a new sense of spatiality: one, that instead of viewing space as a surface on which things are enacted, we imagine it as "a meeting-up of histories"; two, in an echo of Fabian's point, that we need to turn away from the implicit assumption that 'other' spaces reflect a more temporally backward 'us,' and insist instead on "the multiplicities of the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space"; and three, that we should refuse the clear opposition between 'space' as abstract and unrooted, and 'place' as space which is local, known, closed, always there.<sup>132</sup> She offers starting points for thinking about space which might resonate with other theoretical and political projects: seeing space as a product of interrelations, insisting on space as a possibility of multiplicity, and crucially, understanding space as continuously being constructed, being open to unknown futures. "Perhaps," offers Massey, "we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far."<sup>133</sup>

I would like to hang on to these images of diaspora as a series of practices becoming meaningful via a recitation of stories in active relationship with a heterogeneous diaspora space, itself constructed from a confluence of journeys and acts of homing (as London most definitely

is). It is an image which has already surfaced in the process of my own fieldwork: for example, in the ways in which a refugee from Bosnia might relate their own migratory experience to that of other migrants from other nations. These fellow migrants may be narrated as equally foreign in relation to British society as the speaker; as less foreign, on the assumption that many people relocate to London from similarly large, cosmopolitan cities and thus fit in better; or as more foreign, by dint of skin color, religion, a non-European 'mentality.' There is also the matter-of-fact experience of sharing space and time. A London supplementary school for children, with which I have become involved as part of my project, regularly meets at a community center in an area of the city where throngs of tourists come to experience historic Britishness. The very same space, and on the very same day, also hosts an Arabic supplementary school composed of families from multiple nations. As one of the teachers with whom I work has remarked, the two projects have much in common, not only by virtue of largely overlapping religious affinities, but also in the desire to teach integration as a key aspect of living in "this country". Such spatiotemporal coincidences have made me think of the diasporic project of a weekend language school as something which aims to re-affirm an intergenerational connection to a familial space of belonging to Bosnia, while at the same time, and without any contradiction, socializing children in the multicultural act of being British – that is, not only of being diasporic-in-Britain, but of Britishness itself as something which requires the process of simultaneously being something else.

Thinking of these diasporic projects in terms of temporality has further allowed me to wonder whether and how the former Yugoslav experience of multi-nationality is consciously related to this layered British society; or, conversely, whether the segmentation of socialist Yugoslav and contemporary British time prevents such contemporaneous links from being drawn. Such segmentation, if it exists (the fact that the word "Yugoslavia" only rarely crops up unprompted indicates that it very well might), might have multiple causes and may not all be attributable to a lack of analytic attention to coevalness, in Fabian's sense. However, arriving at the question of symbolic temporalities via the more standard optic of diasporic space has convinced me that it is critical to think of diasporic narratives as actively constructing multiple spatiotemporalities at once, even as they are continuously mediated by the times and spaces of their enactment. Refusing the assumption that space is ever only arrived at highlights this confluence of stories-so-far rather than artificially confining them to discrete boxes. There may, in fact, very well be

something which is particular about diasporic stories in comparison with the other narratives that make up spaces of cohabitation, in their very enactment of the assumption that people journey between discrete spaces. In other words, I do not mean to deny that many people indeed do narrate their experience in terms of dislocation, from rooted places of their own to places where other people have their roots. But accepting that such places exist at face value would mean flattening out the time-spaces in which people dwell and in relation to which such stories are produced. Seeing space as an open-ended product of relations where the future is never foreclosed, and where people dwell in contemporaneous time, might cause us to see that space is never simply there, outside the scope of relatedness, and that stories of space never simply describe points across either a spatial or temporal distance.

## **Researching Diasporic Memory through Relational Spatiotemporalities**

The key question in my research so far has been how to incorporate theoretical debates into grounded ethnographic research into post-socialist diasporic memory. Is it enough to acknowledge the multitude of narratives which construct time-spaces, while conceding that much social life is framed with reference to certain conventional forms of narrating time and space? How does an ethnographer pause and take stock in order to ask multiple questions aimed at soliciting a multiplicity of answers? My fieldwork so far has prompted important questions about significance: What are those intergenerational fragments of narrative which are deemed important enough to figure in diasporic time-spaces? And how does this significance differ and shift, not only between people from different backgrounds, but also across particular grounded spaces and times, between a community center and a living room, in answer to one type of question or another? How does the way that people talk about the past intersect with the way they talk about the migratory experience from the vantage point of the present –and how can questions about space aim at answers about time, and vice versa? While these questions have been important for my research from the very beginning, it is the specificity of the temporal and spatial references in the narratives I am encountering which have required that I enrich them with a more nuanced understanding of spatiotemporality: veiled references to socialism told as stories of childhoods; accounts of new borders, and wars, and developmental trajectories; as well as stories of Britain which circle



questions of cultural difference and present-day migration politics, the lived-in spaces of London and other British locales.

In lieu of a conclusion, I end with three interconnected thoughts, which I see as crucial for approaching these and similar questions of diasporic memory. Partially, they represent blueprints for further research on my own topic; I would hope, however, that they may also be more broadly applicable.

1) It would be tempting to conclude that canonical historical narratives of (post-)socialism have about them something of the ritual, and may, since they may not faithfully reflect the actual experience of socialism's temporalities by those who have lived through it, be largely discarded. But having spent considerable time rejecting the notion that ritual time talk is merely illusory, a smoke screen for shared authentic experience, the challenge becomes not how to circumvent well-rooted narratives of the socialist past when and if I encounter them, but rather to see them in the same frame with other linkages between temporality and spatiality and in other genres of time talk. I propose that, if 'ritualized' accounts of the past must always be viewed in relation to other meaningful spatiotemporalities, then they must also be viewed as their constituent components: elements of complex, situated narrations, rather than illusory mystifications of a more genuine underlying narrative. As I alluded to above, I have noted in my conversations with first generation migrants a relative lack of a visibly named socialist Yugoslav past. Rather than taking this as either proof that the experience of socialist Yugoslavia is irrelevant to people's recollections today, or, conversely, proof that such recollections defy mainstream narratives of the rupture of socialism as the defining characteristic of people's lived experience, I have tried to see more muted evocations of this past as they occur in conversations about people's lives in the present, or about other times and places. If conventions stipulate that naming Yugoslavia in casual conversations assumes that the speaker is making an explicit point, then what does my interlocutor make of that point, and how does it position us both vis-à-vis other spatiotemporal markers?

2) Closely related to the first point, talking about a remembered and narrated past may prove a fruitless endeavor

unless I am open to seeing a broad array of experience as evocative of lived histories. If I seek out the specificities of first generation migrants' communicated experience in the commonness rather than the assumed exceptionality of their past lives in socialist Yugoslavia, it may open up a conceptual space where present-day diasporic home-making becomes indirectly narrated in relation to those homes of the past. We are of course speaking of a commonness disrupted by the extreme rupture and exceptionality of war, as well as by multiple migration trajectories. Yet by focusing precisely on the ways in which Yugoslav socialism and the contemporary British space interpellate each other in everyday stories of dwelling – on how they make each other recognizable in relation to each other – I may be able to pose more constructive questions about how lives are imagined. These can then include: How do people make their living? How is everyday life minutely gendered, and how are changes to its gendering conceived? Where and when is everyday life situated in such stories? These questions depend on the realization that we cannot "simply equate 'the everyday' with the local,"<sup>134</sup> that we must necessarily acknowledge the much broader connectivities between spaces and times that they imply. That is to say, they contribute to that confluence of narratives which I see as a key component of diasporic home-making.

3) And finally, I end with the future as a productive site of meaning-making. I am determined in my research to linger on intergenerational narrations of futurity. How can home be articulated in terms of imagined futures? Putting the question from different angles, who belongs to which kind of possible life? How do imagined futures function in relation to the socialist futurities of times passed? And how do they function in a time of financial crisis, which has made even British futures less certain? If the first proposition cautions against seeing the expected narrative as merely a smoke-screen, and the second points to the quotidian as a site of relational meaning-making, here I insist that both these points cannot be confined to past time talk. Thinking of familial experience as narrated across various spatiotemporal dimensions is crucial not just for thinking how the past comes to be remade, but also how the very same process might occur to the yet-to-

happen future. It is the metaphorical space between generations, in the familial relationship of expectation and varying homing desires, that a plurality of ideas about lives fit to be lived might emerge in reference to the future possibilities of younger generations and their parents' own life stories.

The focus in this paper on relational conceptions of spatiotemporality has cast them as active and key participants in the narrative structuring of past, present, and future projects of home-making. They cannot be seen as a reflection of such projects, but must be acknowledged as an ongoing component of people's relational construction of time-spaces. Insofar as I see an agenda for researching narrative diasporic home-making, it lies in the construction of a lens which takes these statements into account: a lens which would see diasporic space beyond the concept of local places re-enacted across national borders, and dwell on diasporic temporalities as co-constitutive of both such spaces and of multi-directional references between past, present, and future possibilities.